

April 10, 2023



***Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife***

***RE: LD 626, LD1166, LD1241 – Bills related to Sunday hunting***

Senator LaFountain, Representative Landry and members of the Joint Standing Committee on Inland Fisheries & Wildlife, my name is BJ McCollister and today I am testifying on behalf The Nature Conservancy. I appreciate this opportunity to testify **in opposition of LD 1241** and the other associated Sunday Hunting bills.

The Nature Conservancy (TNC) is a nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to conserving the lands and waters on which all life depends. Guided by science, we create innovative, on-the-ground solutions to our world's toughest challenges so that nature and people can thrive together. Working in more than 70 countries, we use a collaborative approach that engages local communities, governments, the private sector, and other partners. TNC has been leading conservation in Maine for more than 60 years and manages approximately 300,000 acres of conserved land across the state. We also work with communities to restore rivers and streams, rebuild groundfish populations in the Gulf of Maine, and develop innovative solutions to climate change.

As a large landowner in Maine, we take great pride in working with many user communities and managing our properties to accommodate a variety of values and user groups. TNC has great working partnerships with Maine's natural resource agencies and the many other organizations that engage in natural resource management and recreation. Our staff frequently serve on stakeholder groups and advisory boards to both share our insights and learn about how other communities are approaching land access and management. TNC's Maine Preserves Manager, Daniel Grenier, currently serves on the Landowners and Sportsmen Relations Advisory Board (LSRAB) which advises the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (IFW) on policies and issues related to landowner and land user overlap. It is worth noting that last session when similar efforts to allow Sunday hunting came before the Legislature, the Landowner State Advisory Board (LSAB) unanimously opposed the bill and directly submitted comments to that affect to Commissioner Camuso.

TNC has more than 70 preserves in Maine and almost all (almost 298,000 acres) are open to hunting. The small portion of our properties that aren't open to hunting have management or deed restrictions that tie our hands. We also have over 200 miles of hiking trails on our lands available for public recreational access. TNC believes that current law limiting hunting on Sunday strikes the right balance by giving all non-hunting resource users one day a week where hunters are not present.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.